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ENFORCING CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN GROUP IDENTITY AND PUNITIVE ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES

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JOSHUA DAVIS
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ENFORCING CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM: EXAMINING THE LINK BETWEEN GROUP IDENTITY AND PUNITIVE ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

BY

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Dr. Samuel L. Perry, Chair

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Dr. Thomas J. Burns

_____
Dr. B. Mitchell Peck

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ABSTRACT

I explore how the convergence of one's religious and national identities influences levels of authoritarian attitudes towards crime and deviance using data from the second wave of the Baylor Religion survey. Drawing on theories of social control and group conformity, as well as previous work studying Christian Nationalism's influence on intolerance towards out-groups, I argue that the inability of an individual to distinguish between religious and national identities increases their desire for group homogeny and therefore increases their willingness to utilize formalized measures of social control. I use approval of the use of capital punishment, belief that there should be stricter punishment for federal crime, and belief that society should "crack down on trouble makers" as indicators of authoritarian attitudes towards crime and deviance. Using binary logistic regression, I find that Christian Nationalism significantly predicts both desire for strict punishment of crime as well as cracking down on trouble makers, even after the inclusion of a comprehensive battery of religious and sociodemographic characteristics. Christian Nationalism was, however, only able to predict approval of the use of capital punishment at a marginal level of significance after controlling for social and political controls. Possible reasons for this are discussed. These findings indicate that, beyond the influence of social, political, and religious characteristics of an individual, the belief that the United States is, and should be a "Christian nation," increases desires for group conformity and strict social controls for both criminals and "trouble makers." These findings further our understanding of religion's influence over an individual's understanding of, and attitudes towards deviant members of our society.

> [1] Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. [2] Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement. . . . Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.
>
> Romans 13:1-4 (English Standard Version)

INTRODUCTION

The passage above, taken from the New Testament of the Christian Bible, communicates a belief that law and order are sacred ideals within a righteous community. The ideals expressed here by the apostle Paul to the citizens of Rome tell the reader that God's will is for His people to be submissive to earthly authority. It follows, then, that those who believe that they are true followers of God would resist deviant behavior (Erikson, 2005; Baker and Booth, 2016; Bader et al, 2010). This connection between religious identity and desire to enforce social order is deeply tied to the American political movement known as the "Religious Right" (Dodds, 2012; Hood III and Smith, 2002). Beginning in the aftermath of the second World War, the Republican party of the United States began prominently presenting a platform built conservative ideology (Story and Laurie, 2008). Due in no small part to a hyper-reaction to the rise of Russian Communism and McCarthian antisocialism, conservatism would begin to take a divisive root in the South following a time of unprecedented bi-partisanship during WWII. This conservatism would eventually become a symbolic appeal used in Richard Nixon's "Southern Strategy," used to sway Democrats in the

South to vote for the party that abolished slavery (Kotlowski, 2011; Darsey, 1995; Haidt, 2012). Under the guise of being the "Moral Majority," the Religious Right came to fruition in the 1984 Presidential election of Ronald Reagan. Reagan, using imagery borrowed from scripture, drew parallels between Christian morality and American values, blurring the distinction between the two until they became nearly indistinguishable, promoting a homogenous and intolerant view within American society. Since the mid 1980s, the Religious Right political movement has continued to spread and draw on religious justification for conservative ideology (Froese and Bader, 2008; 2009).

Religious and national identities can be among the most powerful group identifications for individuals, especially in the United States. For many people, religion is among the most important influences in the construction of their individual world view (Froese and Bader, 2010). While religion can bring large groups of people together under a common set of values and beliefs and give individuals a sense of unity and purpose, it simultaneously divides humanity into tribal groups of members and outsiders (Berger, 1967; Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann, 2006; Stark, 2003). Much in the same way, nationalism is intertwined with the idea that one group is inherently preferred over another. For much of Western history these ideas have been found in tandem, and recent American history has seen a resurgence of this close relationship in the rise of the Religious Right as an American political movement (Froese and Mencken, 2009; Williams, 2013). The Religious Right as a movement is largely concerned with dominating the realms of American institutional morality and governmental Biblicism, or simply put, creating a state beholden to Christian beliefs

(Aho, 2012; Leak and Randall, 1995). This desire for a government that reflects not only the American interest, but the Christian interest as well, leads many to form an ideology of "Christian Nationalism" (Goldberg, 2006; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011; Perry and Whitehead, 2015).

While research has explored the extent to which both religion and nationalism are agents of social control, little research has been done to identify the extent to which they work together to promote greater levels of conformity among their members. The convergence of these social identities has been linked to beliefs in social homogeny in previous research (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011; Perry and Whitehead, 2015; Whitehead and Perry, 2015), but has yet to be tested as a predictor of authoritarian views towards deviant behaviors. To fill this gap, I use binary logistic regression analysis to analyze how respondents' level of Christian Nationalism influences the extent to which they approve of punitive measures of social control. Because Christian Nationalists have more difficulty distinguishing between religious and secular identities to understand and enforce normative behaviors, I expect to find a positive relationship between Christian Nationalism and authoritarian attitudes towards crime.

BACKGROUND

Social Control and Punishment

Among the many ways that societies address deviant behavior is sanctioning to reinforce social control (Baumer and Martin, 2013; Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). By establishing individuals as self-interested and rational beings, control theorists such as

Travis Hirschi (1969) and Michael Gottfredson (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990) assert the necessity of punitive action as a deterrent for unwanted behavior from individuals. Inherent in this action is the belief that outsiders are a threat to society and group boundaries must be enforced (Feldman and Stenner, 1997; Jost et al. 2003; King, 2008). The idea, then, is that by legitimizing and enacting negative sanctions for unwanted behaviors, the perceived cost of a deviant action is raised prior to its being committed and is therefore more likely to be foregone. Thus, through the process of successful socialization of individuals, society reinforces reward systems for adherence to established norms while simultaneously punishing the violation of these norms (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990; Iannacconne, 1994; Stack, 2003).

When considering the application of formalized social control, an important question becomes: Who decides what is normative behavior and what is deviant behavior worthy of sanction? Much of the work addressing this question has pointed to power differential, as well as racial and religious group barriers as key factors to consider (Baker and Booth, 2016; Britt 1998; Grasmick et al., 1993; Grasmick et al., 1992; Unnever, Cullen, and Bartkowski, 2006; Wozniak and Lewis, 2010). These studies identify that even the most formalized social control measures (e.g. the application of capital punishment) are heavily dependent on perceived group threat, and differential values of homogeny as a societal goal. Similar studies have looked at regionalism as an explanation of varying use of formalized sanctioning in the United States (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfield 2003; Borg, 1997), finding that the South has significantly higher rates of approval for capital punishment. These feelings of punitiveness are often driven by a symbolic understanding of deviance as rebellion

against the dominant culture (Baker and Booth, 2016; Stack 2003; Tyler and Weber, 1982). Sanctions, under the guise of reinforcing the hegemonic power of one's own group, are not simply correctional responses to undesired behavior, but a symbolic tool for the righteous to combat evil within society.

Religious Influence on Ideology Formation

Religion is among the most influential socializing institutions within a society due in large part to its ability to erect and reinforce barriers between groups, as well as define what is valued in society (Durkheim, [1912] 1995; Berger, 1967; Haidt, 2012). As individuals congregate, it becomes necessary for groups to identify that which Durkheim ([1912] 1965) classifies as "sacred," and everything else, the "profane." The collective understanding of these categories of human experience, then, are disseminated throughout the congregation through ritual and legend. In this way, individuals brought up in religious settings learn the extent of acceptable behavior through the reinforcement of sacred and the sanctioning of the deviant (Erikson, 2005; Baker and Booth, 2016; Stark, 2001).

Through the establishment of sacred and profane, then, individuals are connected to one another by shared values and belief systems (Baker, 2008; Berger, 1967; Botton, 2012; Engell, Gertis, and Hartmann, 2006). These belief systems are used to interpret the physical and social world in which we live and dictate the boundaries of what we define as acceptable behavior. In the same way, religious belief systems define how the individual views those who violate these boundaries through deviant behavior (Bader et al, 2010; Borg, 1997; Iannaccone, 1994). These definitions serve to reinforce barriers of between in-group members and outsiders and strictly

distinguish between the two. Further, by starkly distinguishing between members and outsiders, religious belief systems encourage individuals to desire higher levels of in-group homogeneity (Haidt, 2012). Beliefs about the inherent, and divinely dictated superiority of the in-group instill beliefs that conformity to their own value system is a mechanism for creating and maintaining a better society (Hirschi and Stark, 1969; Jacobs and Carmichael, 2004; Williams, 1996).

Furthermore, the beliefs individuals hold regarding the nature and character of God plays a significant role in how they interpret God's will for humankind in relation to one another as well as the rest of creation (Bader et al., 2010; Froese and Bader, 2008; 2010; Unnever et al., 2006). Differences in the images individuals have in their conception of God's personality has been linked to significant differences in their world view, as well as their social and political beliefs (Froese and Bader, 2008; Froese and Mencken, 2009). These images can also influence the extent to which an individual utilizes their religious beliefs in their daily lives. In Froese and Bader's (2010) seminal work on Christian images of God, they examine over twenty variables asking about individuals' conceptions of God and identify four main beliefs characterizing the image of God held by American Christians; authoritative, benevolent, critical, and distant. In their explanation of these beliefs and the differences between them, the authors demonstrate ways in which believers in these different images of God's character and the role he plays in the world is often reflected in the ways in which the individuals themselves interact with society. For example, those who believe that God is authoritative or critical, and therefore is more active in the day to day activities of his followers, are more likely to use their religious beliefs to define their worldview than

those who believe in a distant God who does not intervene in the daily activities of humanity, or benevolent God who more indiscriminately applies blessing and jealously withholds judgement than do other images of God (Froese and Bader, 2008; 2010).

Religion as a Predictor of Punitive Ideology

Much in the same way religion can be used to influence an individual's world view and ideology, it can influence one's thoughts about more specific issues that face society, such as criminal and deviant behavior (Applegate et al, 2000; Heaton, 2006). Religious affiliation and practice have been linked to more conservative political ideology, authoritarian attitudes, more racial homogeny, and less tolerance of outsiders (Applegate et al, 2000; Baker and Booth, 2016; Britt, 1998; Eckhardt, 1991). Conservative Christian values, i.e. those held in fundamentalist or evangelical denominations, are also more likely to be accompanied by beliefs in punitive or retributive justice in response to deviant behavior (Grasmick et al, 1992; Grasmick et al, 1993). Religion, being a tool of socialization, teaches individuals the absolute delineation between right and wrong. In doing this, religious beliefs allow the individual to legitimize stricter and more condemning beliefs regarding those who violate the sacred boundaries that are clearly defined by their religion (Erikson, 2005; Savelsberg, 2004; Stark, 2003).

In this regard, however, not all religious beliefs are equal. While religious service attendance and affiliation with more conservative Christian churches has historically been linked to increased approval of punitive responses to crime and delinquency (Heaton, 2006; Hirschi and Stark 1969), more recent studies have argued that research should focus on the subtler aspects of religious beliefs (Bader et al, 2010;

Baker, 2008; Leak and Randall, 1995). Bader and his colleagues (2010), for example, using data from the Baylor Religion Survey show that by including measures of the individual's image of God as either angry or loving we can more accurately understand how religious beliefs influence attitudes towards criminal behavior. Similarly, Leak and Randall's (1995) study indicates the need for research to control for more sophisticated measures of religiosity to accurately identify how it influences their religious beliefs. Their findings show that by controlling for more accurate religiosity measures, denominational influences can be moderated.

In what is, to my knowledge, the most recent publication on religious influence on attitudes towards crime, Joseph Baker and Alexis Booth (2016) demonstrate how the belief in religious evil increases an individual's approval of the use of capital punishment as well as stricter punishment for federal crimes. Using data from the second wave of the Baylor Religion Survey, the authors show that belief in "transcendent religious evil" is positively associated with punitive attitudes (Baker and Booth, 2016). These studies demonstrate the need for researchers to use more comprehensive models of religious beliefs and practice to fully understand its influence over how individuals conceptualize deviance, as well as how society should

Christian Nationalism and Group Identification

Similar to religious belief systems, social identities such as race, gender, class, and citizenship contribute to the division of groups within society and delineation between what is acceptable and what is deviant (Brewer, Gonsakorale, and Dommelen, 2013; Britt, 1998; Johnson, 2009). An individual's social identities work both independently and in concert to compose the individual's representation of members of

these groups. Social identity complexity (SIC), as proposed by Roccas and Brewer (2002), outlines the ways in which we distinguish varieties of membership among our social identities. Those who have high SIC are better at distinguishing between their in-groups and identifying the diversity there-in, while those who have low SIC are more likely to allow multiple identities to converge and see members of their in-group as homogenous. This process can take place even when the individual can objectively distinguish differences across social identities by creating an image of a more idealistic group member. In the case of Christian Nationalism, an individual may know that not all Americans are Christian and still contend that *real* Americans are (Roccas and Brewer, 2002; Whitehead and Perry, 2015). When this happens, multiple social identities can converge in such a way that they work together as a single social identity independently of its composing identities, and often this converged identity becomes their most important social identity (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). Thus, the belief that the United States is inherently Christian and should operate accordingly influences the individual differently than their religious and political beliefs.

As the social identities converge into a singular identity through low levels of SIC, individuals become more likely to draw strict lines separating outsiders from their image of the ideal group member. When this happens they then begin to identify and perceive higher levels of threat from outsiders and deviant behaviors (Brewer and Pierce, 2005; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). These perceived threats to the individual's social identity then strengthen their resolve to distinguish themselves from outsiders, making them less tolerant of social identities that deviate from their own (Brewer and

Pierce 2005; Grasmick et al, 1992; Grasmick et al, 1993; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011). It stands to reason, then, that low levels of SIC resulting in Christian Nationalist identifications would reinforce ideals of strict sanctioning of criminal and deviant behaviors in society.

HYPOTHESES

Drawing from the ideas of control theories of crime and deviance, I test the extent to which individuals approve of the establishment, and reinforcement of societal boundaries on human behavior through the act of punitive sanctioning (Gottfredson and Hirschi, 1990). I propose that higher levels of Christian Nationalism will be positively associated with greater levels of authoritarian attitudes towards crime and deviance in reaction to the greater levels of perceived threat from outsiders (Brewer and Pierce, 2005; Jacobs and Carmichael, 2004; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011). Furthermore, in accordance with prior research on Christian Nationalism (Brewer and Pierce 2005; Perry and Whitehead, 2015; Whitehead and Perry, 2015), I expect the influences of Christian Nationalism to act independently of both religious and political ideology. Due to this increased level of perceived group threat by deviant behaviors, I predict that beliefs in Christian Nationalism will positively predict punitive indicators of authoritarian attitudes. These punitive aspects of authoritarian attitudes are represented in analysis by three dependent variables; approval of capital punishment, approval of stricter punishment for crime, and the belief that society needs to "crack down" on trouble makers to maintain moral standards in society.

DATA AND METHODS

To test the influence of Christian Nationalism on authoritarian attitudes towards crime I examine data from the second wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS), which was collected in 2007. The BRS was modeled after the General Social Survey and is intended to assess the religious beliefs and practices of American adults, and was conducted by the Gallup Organization. The second wave of the BRS also contains measurements of Christian Nationalism as well as several attitudinal variables measuring attitudes towards deviance and crime. The unique compilation of religious practice and affiliation measurements, measurements of Christian Nationalism, political views, and attitudes towards criminal behavior in society make it the best data available to address my hypotheses.

A total of 3,500 potential respondents drawn from the telephone owning population of the United States were contacted using random-digit dialing and asked if they would be willing to complete a mailed questionnaire. The selection procedure was designed to include both listed and unlisted numbers by randomly generating the last two digits of the telephone number dialed. Of the 3,500 potential respondents contacted, 1,000 were given a brief phone interview to assess systematic bias based on gender, race, educational attainment, residential region of the United States, and rate of religious service attendance in the types of people who were willing to participate. No evidence of systematic bias in response rate was found. A total of 2,460 questionnaires were sent out, and 1,648 completed surveys were returned for a total response rate of 47.1%. For a more comprehensive description of the collection process for the BRS, see Bader, Menken, and Froese (2007).

Authoritarian Attitudes Towards Crime

Attitudes towards crime are analyzed using three dependent variables measuring respondents' beliefs about formal punishment, and social sanctions for crime and deviance. The first of these three variables asked respondents: 'To what extent do you agree or disagree that the federal government should abolish the death penalty?' responses originally ranged from 1= Strongly Disagree, to 4= Strongly Agree with undecided responses as an option outside of the agreement scale coded as 8. This scale was recoded into a binary response variable so that those who disagreed (strongly) with the statement were coded as one and those who agreed (strongly) or were undecided were coded as zero. Responses for this and subsequent dependent variables were dichotomized due to their non-normal distribution. Though I have sacrificed some variance between each individual response category, the difference between approval and disapproval of the use of social control is preserved.[1]

The second and third dependent variables used in the analyses ask respondents: "To what extent do you agree or disagree that the federal government should punish criminals more harshly," and "Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with [the following] statement: We must crack down on troublemakers to save our moral standards and keep law and order," respectively. Like the first dependent variable, responses were recoded so that they are dichotomous response variables where (1) indicates more authoritarian views of crime. Inclusion of these measures allows me to assess authoritarian attitudes among individuals who may wish to be "tough on crime," but may have reservations about the use of capital punishment.

[1] See also Baker and Booth's (2016) coding of these measures.

Christian Nationalism

To measure Christian Nationalism among respondents, I utilize the Christian Nationalism index outlined by Perry and Whitehead (2015). This index is composed of responses to following six statements: (1) 'The federal government should declare the United States a Christian Nation'; (2) 'The federal government should advocate Christian values'; (3) 'The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces'; (4) 'The federal government should allow prayer in public schools'; (5) 'The success of the United States is part of God's plan'; and (6) 'The federal government should enforce a strict separation of church and state' (reverse coded). These six indicators identify the extent to which individuals allow their religious identity to influence how they would like their nation to function, and who is considered a part of that nation. Prior research has utilized this index to measure the extent of convergence between an individual's Christian and national identities, and found that it acts as a social identity distinct from both religious and political identities (Perry and Whitehead, 2015; Whitehead and Perry, 2015).[2] Reliability testing for these measures yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.871 indicating that the measure is highly reliable. Responses for these measures range from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. These responses were summed to create a total Christian Nationalism index ranging from 6 to 30.

[2] See also McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle (2011) who construct a Christian Nationalism index using similar measures found within the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey (CCES).

Controls

A total of nineteen socio-demographic and religious controls are used in multivariate analysis. The first control variable used in this analyses is the belief in religious evil index constructed by Baker and Booth (2016), which uses measures of belief in the existence of Satan, hell, and that most of the evil in the world is caused by Satan. Both the belief in the existence of Satan and hell range from (1) "absolutely not" to (4) "absolutely," and the belief that Satan causes most evil to happen ranges from (1) "absolutely not" to (5) "absolutely." Responses to these questions were summed to create an index ranging from 3 to 13. Reliability testing of these variables yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .886.

Religious tradition is controlled for using the Steensland et al. (2000) RELTRAD classification system which is included within the BRS. In operationalizing this religious tradition spectrum, I create a series of dummy variables representing Black protestant, Mainline protestants, Catholic, Jewish and other religions, and no religion where (1) indicates membership to each respective tradition.[3] I utilize a religiosity index by summing the mean standardized responses to the following three measures: frequency of religious service attendance, prayer, and reading of religious scriptures.[4]

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[3] Analysis was also conducted with Jewish and Other religious traditions remaining separate dummy variables yielding results that were substantively the same. I collapse Judaism into the "Other religious traditions" due to the relatively small proportion of the sample it represents (2.2%), and because as a separate category there was no significant impact on the results. See also Schleifer, and Chaves (2014).

[4] The religiosity index is mean standardized because response categories for contributing variables are incongruent. Frequency of prayer outside of religious service, for example, is measured from 0 "Never" to 5 "Several times per day," while religious

The respondent's image of God is controlled for using two composite indices created from measures found within the BRS. The first, believing that God is punitive, is constructed from respondents' level of agreement with descriptions of God as angered by human sin, angered by their personal sin, punishing, severe, wrathful, and as punishing of sinners with terrible woes (Cronbach's alpha = .86). The second, believing that God is loving, measures respondents' levels of agreement with descriptions of God as concerned with their personal well-being, directly involved in their personal affairs, forgiving, friendly, ever-present, and loving (Cronbach's alpha = .91). Responses were summed to create a punitive image of God and loving image of God index, each ranging from 6 to 30.

Religious fundamentalism is controlled using a dummy variable that indicates whether the respondent says the term "Fundamentalist" describes their religious identity either "somewhat well" or "very well." Biblical literalism is measured using a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent believes that the Bible is the literal word of God (1) or not (0). Age is measured in years and ranges from 19 to 96. Gender is controlled for using a dummy variable that measures female as 1 holding males as the contrast category. Race is measured by comparing whites (0) to non-whites (1). Education is controlled for using a series of three dummy variables measuring the highest level of educational achievement by the respondent, less than a high school degree, high school and some college (but not a four-year degree), and a four year

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service attendance is measured from 0 "Never" to 8 "Several times per week." Mean standardizing these variables enables me to create an interpretable index using standard deviations from the mean as a measurement of greater or lesser religiosity.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables used in multivariate analyses

Variable	Description	Mean or %	SD
Dependent			
Approval of Death Penalty	Level of agreement with abolishment of death penalty, 1= Agree	65.8%	-
Stricter Federal Punishment	Level of agreement that the federal government should punish crimes more harshly, 1=Agree	68.5%	-
Crack Down on Troublemakers	Level of agreement with the need to crack down on troublemakers to save moral standards and keep law and order, 1= Agree	75.8%	-
Independent			
Christian Nationalism	Scale of Christian Nationalism range 6 to 30	17.90	6.48
Controls			
Religious Evil	Index of belief in religious evil, 3 to 13	9.04	3.33
Evangelical	1= Evangelical Christian	30.5%	-
Black Protestant	1= Black Protestant	3.8%	-
Mainline Protestant	1= Mainline Protestant	22.0%	-
Catholic	1= Catholic	24.0%	-
Other	1= Other	8.7%	-
No Religion	1= No Religion	11.0%	-
Religiosity	Mean standardized composite measure of Religious service attendance, prayer, and reading of religious scriptures	0.0	2.61
Loving God	Scale describing God's nature as "loving," 6 to 30	24.76	5.83
Punitive God	Scale describing God's nature as "punishing," 6 to 30	16.38	6.20
Biblical literalist	1= Biblical Literalist	20.7%	-
Fundamentalist	1=Fundamentalist	16.9%	-
Age	Respondent's age in years, 18 to 96	50.95	16.42
Female	1= Female	55.4%	-
Less Than High School Degree	1= Less than high school degree	6.7%	-
High School Degree	1= High school degree but less than Bachelor's degree	54.8%	-
Bachelor's Degree or Greater	1= Bachelor's degree or greater	38.5%	-
Non-White	1= Non-white	18.4%	-
South	1= South	30.9%	-
Conservative	1= Politically Conservative	42.4%	-
Moderate	1= Politically Moderate	29.4%	-
Liberal	1= Politically Liberal	28.2%	-

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

college degree or more. I also control for whether the respondent lives in the South (1) or not (0) using a dummy variable (Baumer, Messner, and Rosenfeld, 2003).

Finally, political conservatism and liberalism are measured by the respondent's self-identified political views using a series of dummy variables. Conservatism is coded (1) if the respondent claimed that they politically "lean conservative," are "conservative" or are "extremely conservative," liberalism is measured by collapsing the mirrored response categories for those who identify as politically liberal, and those who identify as politically moderate are held as the contrast category in multivariate analysis.[5] For multivariate analysis the data are weighted using a population weight variable created by the Gallup group provided in the BRS. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of all variables used in multivariate analysis.

ANALYTIC STRATEGY

I begin by examining the bivariate relationship between the religious and socioeconomic variables described above, and each of the three punitive attitudes analyzed in this study using contingency tables and independent samples t-tests, normal distribution of variance is not assumed. The following results are derived from binary logistic regression analysis of each punitive attitudinal variable. A total of nine models are presented, three per dependent variable. I use a base model including only Christian Nationalism for each variable, followed by inclusion of religious control variables, and a final model that is composed of all variables used in model 2 as well as

[5] Originally those who said that they "leaned" conservative or liberal were coded as politically moderate because of the non-committal nature of those response categories. Grouping them with more hardline conservatives or liberals, however, yielded more conservative results which are presented here.

sociodemographic characteristics. I limit the scope of each analytical model to include only those cases present in the final model, making differences between models more interpretable, and ensuring that they are not a result of sample variance. Results of all binary logistic regression analysis are presented using odds ratios.

RESULTS

Bivariate Analysis

Table 2 shows significant differences in support for the death penalty, strict federal punishment for crime, and wanting to crack down on troublemakers based on religious tradition. Evangelicals are consistently more punitive across each of the three metrics of social control, apart from black protestants in cracking down on troublemakers. This finding is consistent with prior research on denominational differences in punitive ideologies (Wozniak and Lewis, 2010; Baker, 2008). Further, I find that biblical literalism and fundamentalism significantly predict approval of social control measures, as do regionalism, political conservatism, and education. Racial and gender differences are shown to only significantly predict approval of the death penalty, and differences between men and women, as well as between whites and non-whites on less extreme forms of social control are not statistically significant.

Table 3 presents bivariate relationships for continuous variables used in the multivariate analyses. Christian Nationalism is consistently shown to be the strongest bivariate predictor of punitive attitudes (t=11.10 for approval of the death penalty, t=14.28 for wanting strict punishment for crime, and t= 18.91 for wanting to crackdown

Table 2. Contingency Tables for Authoritarian Indicators and Categorical Predictors (Row Percentages)

	Death Penalty	Strict Punishment	Crack Down
Religious Tradition			
X^2	91.26***	94.84***	129.89***
Evangelical	80.54	78.41	84.84
Black Protestant	47.27	67.86	91.38
Mainine Protestant	63.93	69.50	77.39
Catholic	65.32	73.53	81.10
Other	59.42	51.85	57.25
None	45.14	43.43	49.13
Biblical Literalist			
X^2	6.35*	40.68***	50.16***
Yes	72.27	83.44	90.85
No	64.82	64.90	72.09
Religious Fundamentalist			
X^2	35.72***	28.36***	29.80***
Yes	82.19	82.45	88.76
No	62.39	65.05	72.35
Gender			
X^2	13.14***	.27	.18
Male	70.57	69.12	75.31
Female	61.94	67.91	76.22
Education			
X^2	35.33***	86.37***	95.70***
Less Than High School	53.00	77.78	85.44
High School	72.21	77.06	84.11
Bachelor's Degree or Greater	59.09	54.81	62.80
Region			
X^2	15.29***	4.31*	24.43***
Southern	72.73	72.06	83.67
Not Southern	62.70	66.85	72.30
Race			
X^2	9.52**	.61	.06
Non-White	58.19	66.44	75.86
White	67.73	68.80	76.55
Political Views			
X^2	230.13***	210.23***	209.69***
Conservative	83.38	83.53	88.56
Moderate	66.67	72.35	80.09
Liberal	39.41	42.83	51.13

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

† $p < .10$;* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Table 3. T-test Results for Interval and Ordinal Predictors of Authoritarian Indicators

	Death Penalty			Strict Punishment			Crack Down		
	Yes	**No**	**T**	**Yes**	**No**	**T**	**Yes**	**No**	**T**
Age	51.00	50.55	.51	51.54	49.16	2.73	52.12	47.53	5.09
Religiosity	.11	-.25	2.57***	.18	-.44	4.35***	.27	-.85	7.47***
Religious Evil	9.58	7.96	8.67***	9.73	7.48	12.25***	9.72	6.97	14.19***
Christian Nationalism	19.22	15.35	11.10***	19.57	14.28	15.61***	19.55	12.87	18.91***

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)
† $p < .10$;* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.
Absolute Value of t-statistics reported
Equal variances across variables not assumed for t-tests

on troublemakers). Table 3 also shows that belief in religious evil and religiosity are positive bivariate predictors of punitive attitudes. Taken together with results presented in Table 2, it is noteworthy that all religious measures have a positive bivariate relationship with each punitive variable.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 4 presents the binary logistic regression results of models predicting respondents' level of approval of capital punishment. Model 1 tests only the influence of Christian Nationalism without any control measurements. The result is statistically significant and the odds ratio (*OR*=1.082; p<.001) indicates that every unit increase in Christian Nationalism indicated by the respondent coincided with an eight percent increase in likelihood of support for capital punishment.

Model 2 includes the controls for belief in religious evil, religious tradition, religiosity, biblical literalism, and religious fundamentalism. The overall effect of Christian Nationalism remains roughly the same after inclusion of these controls and remains statistically significant. Along with increased belief in Christian Nationalism,

belief that God is punitive, and being fundamentalist are positive predictors of a respondent's support of capital punishment. Black and Mainline protestants, Catholics, and religious nones were all shown to be less supportive of the death penalty as compared to evangelical protestants. After controlling for Christian Nationalism, belief in religious evil, and religious tradition, religious practice becomes a negative predictor of support for capital punishment.

The third and final model presented in Table 4 adds controls for socio-demographic characteristics and the political views of respondents. After inclusion of these metrics the effect of Christian Nationalism, while still positive, becomes only marginally significant (*OR*= 1.035; p<.10). Mainline protestants, Catholics, and religious nones remain significantly less supportive of capital punishment than do evangelicals, though the differences between black protestants and evangelicals become non-significant. After inclusion of socio-demographic controls, biblical literalism becomes a significant negative predictor of capital punishment, while religious fundamentalism becomes only marginally significant. Political conservatives (*OR*=1.688; p<.05) are about 69 percent more likely, and liberals (*OR*=.391; p<.001) are about 61% less likely to support the use of capital punishment than are political moderates. The full model of Table 4 indicates that, for capital punishment, Christian Nationalism is unable to independently predict punitive attitudes at a 95 percent confidence interval. I believe this loss of significance is possibly because capital punishment is a very extreme form of social control, and people may be more reliant on religious or political doctrine than more ambiguously defined feelings of group

Table 4. Binary Logistic Regression Results of Christian Nationalism and Approval of Capital Punishment

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
	OR	*OR*	*OR*
Christian Nationalism	1.082***	1.084***	1.035†
Religious Controls [a]			
Religious Evil		1.071	1.071
Black Protestant		.270**	.412
Mainline Protestant		.421**	.420**
Catholic		.486**	.487**
Other		.820	.815
None		.271***	.254***
Religiosity		.831***	.791***
Loving God		.979	.985
Punitive God		1.036*	1.026
Biblical Literalist		.599†	.556*
Fundamentalist		1.825*	1.639†
Socio-demographic Controls [a]			
Age			1.000
Female			.917
Less Than High School Degree			.606
Bachelor's Degree or Greater			.946
Non-White			.862
South			1.408†
Conservative			1.688*
Liberal			.391***
Intercept	.569*	.500	1.306
N	1,150	1,150	1,150
Cragg & Uhler R^2	0.069	0.166	0.232

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)
[a]Evangelical Protestant, White, Male, High School Degree, Politically Moderate, and South are Contrast Categories
† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

membership to guide their beliefs of support or opposition (Britt, 1998; Jacobs and Carmichael, 2004; Stack, 2003; Wozniak 2010).

Table 5. Binary Logistic Regression Results of Christian Nationalism and Level of Agreement with Stricter Federal Punishment for Crime

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
	OR	*OR*	*OR*
Christian Nationalism	1.142***	1.107***	1.061*
Religious Controls [a]			
Religious Evil		1.132**	1.131*
Black Protestant		.938	1.127
Mainline Protestant		1.107	1.104
Catholic		1.380	1.321
Other		.946	.891
None		.870	.861
Religiosity		.821**	.804**
Loving God		1.005	1.014
Punitive God		1.034†	1.023
Biblical Literalist		1.561	1.304
Fundamentalist		1.161	1.041
Socio-demographic Controls [a]			
Age			1.012†
Female			1.238
Less Than High School Degree			1.054
Bachelor's Degree or Greater			.744
Non-White			1.254
South			1.100
Conservative			2.107**
Liberal			.553**
Intercept	.230***	.055***	.058**
N	1,149	1,149	1,149
Cragg & Uhler R^2	0.174	0.225	0.280

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)
[a]Evangelical Protestant, White, Male, High School Degree, Politically Moderate, and South are Contrast Categories
† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Tables 5 and 6 utilize the same analytic models as Table 4 and demonstrate that Christian Nationalism independently predicts less serious forms of social control. The full model shown in table 5 indicates that for each unit increase in Christian Nationalist

beliefs, individuals are six percent more likely to think that the federal government should more strictly punish criminals. Table 5 also identifies belief in religious evil and political conservatism as positive predictors of wanting strict punishment, while those who are more religiously active or politically liberal tend to be less supportive of stricter punishment. These results support my hypothesis, showing that net of religious tradition, practice, and socio-demographic characteristics, beliefs in America as an inherently Christian nation contribute to punitive attitudes towards criminals.

The full model displayed in Table 6 yields more significant predictors for wanting to "crack down on troublemakers" than does Table 5. Christian Nationalism strongly predicts these desires, showing that for every unit increase individuals are ten percent more likely to agree that "cracking down" will maintain moral standards in society. Interestingly, evangelicals are shown to be the least willing among Christians to want to crack down on trouble makers, and black protestants especially are almost six times as likely to be supportive of this form of social control than are evangelicals. Religious practice remains negatively associated with punitive attitudes after controlling for other religious metrics. Table 6 also reveals that each year a person ages they become more likely to agree with the idea of cracking down on trouble makers. These models indicate that, as with wanting stricter federal punishments for crime, having a more restricted view of in group members as indicated by Christian Nationalism is strongly associated.

Taken together, results of these analyses indicate that respondents who are less able to distinguish between their Christian and American identities hold more punitive

Table 6. Binary Logistic Regression Results of Christian Nationalism and Belief that Society Needs to "Crack Down" on Troublemakers to Protect Moral Standards and Maintain Law and Order

	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**
	OR	*OR*	*OR*
Christian Nationalism	1.169***	1.143***	1.101***
Religious Controls [a]			
Religious Evil		1.072	1.056
Black Protestant		5.813**	5.804**
Mainline Protestant		1.840*	1.965*
Catholic		2.110**	2.141*
Other		1.164	1.194
None		.970	.943
Religiosity		.849**	.828**
Loving God		1.001	1.009
Punitive God		1.061**	1.0521*
Biblical Literalist		1.322	1.111
Fundamentalist		.963	.940
Socio-demographic Controls [a]			
Age			1.019**
Female			1.261
Less Than High School Degree			1.440
Bachelor's Degree or Greater			.701†
Non-White			1.339
South			1.761*
Conservative			1.374
Liberal			.422***
Intercept	.258***	.052***	.046***
N	1,150	1,150	1,150
Cragg & Uhler R^2	0.208	0.266	0.329

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)
[a]Evangelical Protestant, White, Male, High School Degree, Politically Moderate, and South are Contrast Categories
† $p < .10$;* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

attitudes towards crime and deviance, though this identity conflation may not contribute to their approval of capital punishment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The convergence of the religious and national identities of an individual is a growing area of study within the scientific community. Along with previous research on this convergence (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle, 2011; Perry and Whitehead, 2015; Whitehead and Perry, 2015) I argue that this convergence increases individuals' desire for a more homogenous society by limiting the scope of ideal group membership. This desire is then reflected in stronger beliefs in the effectiveness and necessity of punitive measures against both criminal and deviant behavior at both the individual and structural levels of society.

In line with these theoretical frameworks, I predicted that Christian Nationalism would be a strong predictor of authoritarian responses to crime and deviance. Drawing influence from existing research on social identity complexity theories, as well as religious predictors of punitive ideologies, I demonstrate that as the boundary between one's Christian and American identities becomes less distinct their approval of the the use of strict punishment for federal crimes, and willingness to "crack down on trouble makers are significantly increased. Though Christian Nationalism presented strong predictive power for approval of the death penalty in the first two analytical models, it became only marginally significant after controlling for political ideology. These results indicate that idealization of America as a Christian nation, which is reflected in socio-political movements such as the "Religious Right," imply a belief that the United States should conform to a strict set of moral and legal guidelines under threat of strict, but non-lethal, sanctioning (Gorski, 1993; Goldberg 2006; King, 2008).

These results were tested using the most current models of religious and social control variables on punitive attitudes adopted from Baker and Booth's (2016) study on religious evil. In a direct comparison to this study, I find that even controlling for belief in religious evil, Christian Nationalist beliefs are strong predictors of approval for stricter criminal punishment. This indicates that net of an individual's religious identity, the effect of convergence with their national identity increases the desire to enforce a homogenous society by harshly sanctioning violators of social norms.

Furthermore, my findings indicate that this convergence can predict these authoritarian views even for less egregious violation of these norms than federal crimes. Using the same models to test the individual's desire to punish "troublemakers" I find that the belief in religious evil is not a significant predictor, while Christian Nationalism is. I argue, then, that by measuring the extent to which one's religious identity is intermingled with their national identity furthers our understanding of how these religious beliefs impact the individual's view of the ideal American society. My study diverges from Baker and Booth's (2016) in two important ways. First, I categorize political views and educational attainment into dummy variables instead of treating them as a continuous spectrum since political conservatism is of central concern politically, and the BRS does not measure education in years (Stack, 2003; Perreault and Bourhis, 1999; Eckhardt, 1991). And second, I constrain all multivariate models to cases found in the full model to ensure that any loss of significance is due to the addition of important control variables, and not loss of cases.

Though I utilize the most recent published models of religious influence over authoritarian attitudes to my knowledge, as well as accepted measures of Christian

Nationalism (Baker and Booth, 2016; Perry and Whitehead 2015), there are several limitations to the findings presented in this paper. First, despite the relative diversity of using three indicators to measure authoritarian attitudes, they are limited to beliefs at a societal level rather than a familial or inter-personal level. Researchers wishing to further investigate the influence of Christian Nationalism on authoritarian attitudes would benefit from the inclusion of more individualized measures such as parental practices. Second, this study is only able to provide us with the quantitative impacts of Christian Nationalist beliefs. Based on these results, I am unable to definitively outline the mechanisms by which convergence of religious and national identities shape one's beliefs. To address this limitation, future studies of Christian Nationalism would greatly benefit by utilizing more qualitative approaches of research, possibly through the collection of in depth interviews. And finally, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data presented, I am unable to definitively discern the direction of association between Christian Nationalism and punitive attitudes towards deviance.[6] Despite these limitations, my study addresses substantial gaps in our understanding of Christian Nationalism, as well as religious influence on authoritarian attitudes and behaviors.

Within the broader scope of our understanding of religion in the United States, this study shows the consequences of the American public's unique religiosity with respect to their attitudes towards deviance. By intimately associating the American experience to a narrative of Christian heritage through the process of religious socialization, the boundaries of ideal in-group characteristics contract, drawing with it

[6] Though I cannot definitively demonstrate whether Christian Nationalism increases one's punitive attitudes, I would contend that identity forms attitude and therefore logically we could conclude that Christian Nationalism increases one's desire to crack down on troublemakers, and not the other way around.

the landscape of acceptable social behaviors. Taken together with previous findings that Christian Nationalism reduces approval of racial exogamy (Perry and Whitehead, 2015), as well as their approval for same-sex marriage (Whitehead and Perry, 2015), the results presented in this study reiterate the need for scholars to consider the extent to which religious beliefs are used to inform one's non-religious identities. In doing so, future research will be able to identify the mechanisms by which American religiosity separates us from other developed Western societies.

In conclusion, as society questions the role of punitive measures in the public arena, and the legitimacy of U.S. policies towards criminals, the understanding of how an individual's religious identity interacts with other social identities becomes more important. By examining the convergence of religious and national identities, my study provides an important starting point for future research in both social identity complexity theory, as well as religious influences within social and political movements. My findings also contribute to the growing literature that utilizes disaggregated measures of religiosity as predictors of social beliefs. With the growing popularity of conservative political movements which utilize a Christianized American framework, it is important that researchers continue to study and record the larger social implications of Christian Nationalism.

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